



G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center

to care for him who shall have borne the battle and his widow, and orphan

FOCUSED ON YOU

HIGH RELIABILITY ORGANIZATION

APRIL 2019

Commitment to High Reliability

You may have heard that the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center was selected as one of 18 sites across the country to lead VHA on a journey to becoming a High Reliability Organization (HRO).

This journey will lead VA on a path to transform VHA culture to ensure we focus on empowering frontline staff to speak up for patient safety and look for ways to improve processes.

Why High Reliability Now?

High reliability is also championed by the Joint Commission as a way of improving all medical care in this country. As an industry at large, health care has been behind the curve in adopting principles and practices that improve safety. Preventable medical errors rank behind heart disease and cancer as the third leading cause of death in the United States. VHA benefits from a history of process improvement and patient focus, but further commitment from leadership, a culture of safety, and robust continuous improvement will guide our HRO transformation.

Pioneered in highly complex environments, such as aviation and nuclear energy, HRO's put procedures and protocols in place that maximize safety and minimize harm, which the medical industry assures every patient receives excellent care, every time.

High reliability focuses on a culture where recognizing the smallest errors can lead to improvements in

**Every Patient
Will Receive
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Every Time**

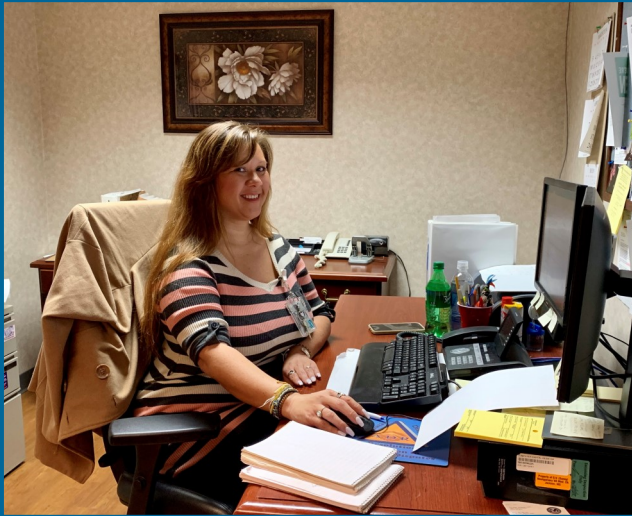
our processes that ensure better patient safety, with the goal of ensuring that every patient receives excellent care every time.

Dr. Stone, VHA Executive in Charge, recently stood up the Office of Patient Advocacy Program to ensure that every Veteran, family member, and caregiver has someone to talk to when they have concerns about the treatment of a Veteran. Every VA Medical Center has a Patient Advocacy program to advocate for the Veterans and resolved concerns.

Here at the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center, we will be implementing a Service Level Patient Advocate (SLPA) program in each area of the hospital. A Service Level advocate is an employee designated at the service level, or point of service, who assists in resolving issues after first attempts at resolution have not been successful. A

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FACILITY PATIENT ADVOCATES



Kim Reed is the Consumer Affairs Specialist and supervises the Patient Advocates. Kim has worked for VA for seven years and previously worked for DoD for 5 1/2 years.

Why is being a patient advocate important?

It is important that Veterans and their families have an avenue to help them navigate the system when they are having issues.

What have you gained from this experience?

I have learned to be more patient with people and to be an active listener. In many cases, Veterans or their family members just want to have someone listen to them vent about their situation and make sure that it does not happen to someone else.

What is your best memory as a patient advocate?

Every opportunity that I get to help a Veteran in need is a good experience. I can't single out one time in 12 1/2 years that means more than another. I come from a family of Veterans and this is my opportunity and my honor to serve the ones who served us.

“Taking care of Veterans is important to me coming from a military background as a dependent daughter and wife.”

(Commitment to High Reliability continued from front page)

Service-level Advocate resolves Veteran issues as a collateral duty, working in collaboration with the facility Patient Advocate staff to identify opportunities for improvement.

5 Steps to Resolving Concerns

Our goal is to be responsive and sensitive to your needs and quickly answer questions or resolve any of your concerns.

Please give us this opportunity by using the 5 Step Process in the order listed.

Step 1: Notify a member of your healthcare team. If you are unable to reach a resolution:

Step 2: Ask to speak with the area Supervisor. If the issue is still unresolved:

Step 3: Request to speak with a Service Level Patient Advocate in the area where you are receiving care. If the issue is still unresolved:

Step 4: Ask to speak with the Service Chief. If still unable to reach a resolution:

Step 5: Speak with a Facility Patient Advocate.

Genice Johnson has worked for VA for 20 years, and as a patient advocate for the last 13 years. Her passion is to serve others.

Why is being a patient advocate important?

My father served in the Air Force, and two of my brothers served in the Army. Many of my uncles and cousins served as well dating back to World War II.

What have you gained from this experience?

There is no greater joy than helping Veterans, their family and friends navigate the VA system.

What is your best memory as a patient advocate?

I had dropped by my office for a moment after visiting my son's grave and overheard someone telling a Veteran on the phone that the mail had already left for the day and it would be Monday before the prescription would be mailed out. The Veteran was afraid he would be without medication all weekend, so I said to my supervisor that I will take the prescriptions to the Veteran. I was several counties from where I live and there was a bad storm. It was raining so hard that the Veteran's yard looked like a pond. Good thing I had my boots in the car! With tears running down his face he said, "May God bless you always."



Jennifer Sayles has worked for VA for 15 years, and as a patient advocate for five years.

Why is being a patient advocate important?

I am a stickler for making sure that things are done correctly.

What have you gained from this experience?

Being a patient advocate has given me a sense of appreciation for the men and women that put their lives on the line so that I may experience various freedoms.

What is your best memory as a patient advocate?

When I assisted a Veteran and his caregiver with lodging and meals in another non-VA facility/state and they contacted the state senator's office and informed him that they had regained faith and trust in the JVAMC all because of me.

Our Veterans deserve the safest, highest quality care. Their care is our mission, and we are committed to continuously improving to ensure that every patient receives excellent care every time.

VHA has always been a leader in patient safety

- In 1999, the Institute of Medicine (IoM) released “To Err is Human,” indicating 44,000-98,000 people die in hospitals each year due to preventable medical errors.
- In the same year, VHA established the National Center for Patient Safety (NCPS) to drive nationwide improvements.
- Today, VHA acknowledges our historical presence and nation-wide contributions to patient safety, but also the need for greater consistency in prioritization of safety across all levels of our organization.
- VHA leadership is committed to reinvigorating our efforts and furthering American medicine by driving our localized improvements to an enterprise-level.

Your care is our **Mission.**

Affirming the trust of Veterans and
their families through the achievement
of Zero Harm and an unmatched
experience is our **Vision.**

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